

# Going Public

By Jeremy Myers, Augsburg College, Minneapolis, MN

## Leader's Materials

### To the Leader

As with all curriculum, please feel free to change and rearrange in order to make it work for you and your people. I have also included a PowerPoint that may or may not be helpful. Familiarize yourself with this lesson plan and then make it your own. Have fun with it and help people think about how these practices might take shape in their own settings.

### Learning Outcomes

1. Participants will understand why it is important for congregations to find public ways of expressing faith with youth.
2. Participants will understand the artforms and see their value as ways of expressing faith publically.
3. Participants will have a few practical ways of beginning to move their congregation into the public square with and for their youth.

### Background

1. In *You Lost Me*, David Kinnaman identifies three key areas of weakness in the church's approach to discipleship – relationships, vocation and wisdom. Our young people are not connected relationally to enough people in the church to stay engaged in the church. Our congregations do not help young people understand or practice living out God's call in their daily lives. Our congregations spend more time passing on "information" rather than wisdom, which is the ability to use information wisely. A public approach to discipleship addresses all three of these problems.
2. Kinnaman also identifies 6 reasons why Millennials "drop out" of church and what the church's response, or alternative, might be.

Reasons for "dropping out"	Appropriate Response
<b>Church is overprotective:</b> the church is too overprotective	<b>Discernment:</b> the church must help young people discern the movement of God's spirit in risky ways
<b>Church is shallow:</b> the church's approach to discipleship is too shallow	<b>Apprenticeship:</b> churches must apprentice young people in discipleship
<b>Church is anti-science:</b> the church is sometimes anti-science	<b>Stewardship:</b> the church must openly discuss and live out its call to steward creation
<b>Church is repressive:</b> the church is naïve in its teaching about sex	<b>Relational:</b> the church must discuss sex within a larger conversation of purity lived out in relationships
<b>Church is exclusive:</b> the church excludes many who are different	<b>Embrace:</b> the church must find ways to embrace difference
<b>Church is doubtless:</b> the church appears to not appreciate or acknowledge doubt	<b>Doing:</b> the church must model how one lives out her faith in the midst of doubt

3. The Claim of this Lesson: An intergenerational faith community actively engaged in discerning public expressions of faith for the common good will incorporate most, if not all, of these alternatives, resulting in a more urgent and fruitful approach to discipleship with youth.

## **Lesson Plan: Going Public**

### **INTRODUCTION** (20 minutes)

#### **Introduce the concept (Slide #1 – Going Public)**

##### *Think-Pair-Share*

- Give the participants a few minutes to reflect and write about a time when they experienced a congregation engaged in a vibrant expression of faith in the public square.
- After a few minutes have them partner with someone they don't know or don't know well (for the sake of time keep it to pairs – no more than two people). Have the pairs share their experience with one another.
- After allowing the pairs to share, process these experiences as a large group. Ask for a few volunteers to share their experiences. Then ask the group to identify what made these experiences so vibrant or profound or meaningful? Be ready to process these examples, good or bad. If they do not have many examples of this, then that becomes a teachable moment and evidence that we need to do more in this area.

#### **Introduce the problem (Slides #2 & #3 - The Problem)**

Share the findings from Kinnaman's *You Lost Me* (from "Background" above), either as a handout or PowerPoint (see handout at end of this lesson).

#### **Connect the concept to the problem (Slide #4 – The Claim)**

Share the claim of this lesson: An intergenerational faith community actively engaged in discerning and creating public expressions of faith that are for the common good will incorporate most, if not all, of Kinnaman's suggested responses, resulting in a more urgent and fruitful approach to discipleship with youth.

### **THE FIVE ARTFORMS** (40 minutes)

#### **Preparation**

Have each artform and its respective definition, purpose and practice pre-written on large sheets of paper or be prepared to write them up as you are explaining them. Present them one at a time and then hang them up at different stations around the room or have them already hanging around the room and move to each station as you present on each artform. There are activities listed that you can lead for each artform before breaking them into groups. There might not be time for this, so you will have to decide whether or not to include them.

#### **Introduction (Slides #5 & #6 – The Artforms)**

Introduce this part of the lesson by saying something like this: *There are 5 artforms a faith-community will engage when seeking more public expressions of faith with their youth. The truth is there are probably more than 5, but these 5 are a good – and necessary – place to start. We are using the term "artform" to denote that the dynamic nature of each. Just as two artists do not paint in the same way, two congregations will not practice accompaniment in the same way.*

## **1. Accompaniment (Slide #7)**

### *Definition*

Practicing the artform of accompaniment means to develop congregational practices that allow the congregation to listen carefully to its neighborhood, its context. Accompaniment implies partnership. Congregations are partners working for the good of the community with other neighbors and institutions. Accompaniment implies that the first act of any ministry is the act of listening.

### *Purpose*

The purpose of accompaniment is to hear the needs of our neighbors and to teach our young people the art of seeking and listening for God's work in the joys and sorrows of our communities.

### *Practice*

There are many ways this artform can be put into practice, but here are some ideas.

- *Prayer Walk* – Teach your youth and adults how to pray the Awareness Examen (see Discernment below). In this prayer one asks God to point out the moments of consolation and the moments of desolation in one's life. Walk the neighborhood/ community surrounding your congregation while discerning those places of consolation and desolation within your community.
- *Community Asset Mapping* – This is similar to the Prayer Walk but with an additional step of intentionality. After (or during) the walk, have participants map the places of consolation and desolation on a map of your community. Where are the places of hope in our community? Where are the places of fear or brokenness in our community?
- *Neighborhood Meetings* – Encourage your congregation to attend neighborhood and community meetings for the community in which your congregation is located.
- *Interviews* – Interview residents, local businesses and other institutions in your neighborhood. Ask them what they think are the strengths and weaknesses of the community. Ask them what they think the congregation could do to help strengthen the community.

### *Activity*

Briefly engage the group in the following activity as an example of accompaniment - individually make a list of community organizations/resources/communities/needs located within 5 miles of your congregation. After making the list, pick one or two and note some of the needs of that group or brainstorm ideas of how your congregation might come alongside that need or group.

## **2. Biblical Imagination (Slide #8)**

### *Definition*

Practicing the artform of biblical imagination entails developing congregational practices that allow the congregation to hear, understand and apply the biblical narrative. It is more complex than finding a bible verse to apply to every situation. It is a worldview, or framework, based on the concepts we find in the biblical narrative including sin, redemption, covenant, exodus, forgiveness, justice, etc.

### *Purpose*

The purpose of helping our youth and adults develop a biblical imagination together is to help them develop the ability to think about and understand their life experiences in light of the biblical narrative. This will demonstrate to them that God's Word is alive and active today and is waiting to be interpreted by a community of people discerning God's work in the world.

### *In Practice*

There are many ways this artform can be put into practice, but here are some ideas.

- *Word on the Street* – Choose a text from scripture and read the same text in two or three different locations in your community. Help the group explore how the context changes the way you think about the text. For example, read the Good Samaritan in the elementary school playground, on the outskirts of town, and in the church’s sanctuary. How does the setting change the way we think about the text?
- *Connecting Narratives* – After completing the practices described under the artform of Accompaniment, challenge the group to think of biblical stories that might match the stories they’ve learned about their community. Is there a “David and Goliath” type narrative at work in your community? A “Widow’s Mite” narrative? How do these community narratives change our interpretation of the text? How do the biblical narratives change our interpretation of our community?

### *Activity*

Think of a biblical story that changed the way you thought about an experience or think of an experience that changed the way you interpreted a biblical story. Share in pairs.

## **3. Discernment (Slide #9)**

### *Definition*

Practicing the artform of discernment involves congregational practices geared towards listening not only to the community, but also to God as we are called to serve our neighbors. Discernment is the process of discovering God’s call to us as individuals and as a faith community.

### *Purpose*

The purpose is to help our young people know how to listen for God’s still, small voice in the midst of their daily lives so they might recognize the call to discipleship as it happens in both mundane and profound ways.

### *In Practice*

There are many ways this artform can be put into practice, but here are some ideas.

- *Awareness Examen* – The Awareness Examen is a simple way of praying over a specific period of time or experience. It is a time of personal, silent prayer during which you ask God to reveal to you the moments of consolation (healing, peace, etc.) and desolation (brokenness, fear, etc.). Learning to pray this way helps people learn to recognize God’s work in both joyful and sorrowful experiences. A community that practices this prayer together on a regular basis will find themselves drawn as a community to times and places of healing and brokenness. A simple Google search for Awareness Examen will return many resources for leading this prayer. Experiment with them and find a method that works for you.
- *Lectio Divina* – Lectio Divina is a way of praying with the bible. It asks participants to listen prayerfully to a biblical text in order to hear a word or phrase that grabs their attention at that moment. It then asks them to consider how this word or phrase might be a prayer for them at that time. This practice helps individuals connect God’s word to their daily lives and helps them reimagine their daily experiences.

### *Activity*

Have participants get comfortable and quiet themselves. Guide them through the Awareness Examen on the last time they were with a group of youth from their church. Ask them to notice the moments of consolation and desolation in that experience. What insight into your youth ministry did you receive from this exercise? What needs to happen next?

## **4. Reflective Practice (Slide #10)**

### *Definition*

Practicing the artform of reflective practice entails developing congregational practices that allow the community to reflect thoughtfully and theologically on their experiences and their response to these experiences. It takes seriously the process of reflection, which must always happen after every experience and before every action.

### *Purpose*

The purpose of reflective practice is to help our young people experience how our faith commitments influence the way we understand our experiences and that ways we take action in response to what life throws at us. It teaches our young people how to think theologically about the claims their actions make.

### *In Practice*

There are many ways this artform can be put into practice, but here are some ideas.

- *Reflective Practice Cycle* – Reflective practice involves a simple four-step cycle, (1)Experience (2)Interpretation: What just happened? Why did this just happen? What does it mean? How do we feel about what just happened? What was God up to in this experience? (3)Discernment: What is the invitation? To what is God calling us? What should we do about it? (4)Action for Transformation: Planning and implementing an appropriate response to the experience for the common good. Most youth ministries never spend time on the tasks of interpretation or discernment. You might consider all of the above artforms (accompaniment, biblical imagination, and discernment) as tools to help you reflect on experience towards action.

### *Activity*

Think of a recent experience that was important for the youth of your congregation. How did you help them reflect on what was going on during and after the experience? How did you help them think about what God was doing through this experience? What do you think God was doing during this experience? What was God calling your group to next?

## **5. Ritualization (Slide #11)**

### *Definition*

Practicing the artform of ritualization entails developing congregational practices that mark significant times and places in the public square and claim them as times and places in which God was, is and will be at work.

### *Purpose*

The purpose of ritualization is to make public claims about who we think Christ is, what we believe Christ does, and where we believe Christ does these things. It is meant to mark times and places when

and where we believe Christ has been at work bringing about forgiveness, healing, and redemption and offering hope. We ritualize so that our young people will ask us questions about faith (see Joshua 4:1-24).

### *In Practice*

There are many ways this artform can be put into practice, but here are some ideas.

- *Celebration and Mourning* – Pay attention to the events in your location that cause your community to celebrate or mourn. What can your faith community do in the public square to allow the larger community to celebrate or mourn in constructive ways?
- *Time and Place* – Pay attention to the places and times in your location that are sacred for your community. What can your faith community do in the public square at these locations and at these times that allow the larger community to jointly acknowledge the significance of these times and places.

### *Activity*

Identify one time or place that is almost sacred in your community. Why is it so special? How can the congregation mark this time or place as sacred and special?

## **CREATIVE BRAINSTORMING** (30 minutes)

### **Introduction**

Of course, the beauty and challenge of “going public” with ministry is in the fact that this must take shape in ways that work in your setting. No one else can tell you how these artforms must be practiced or what your public expressions of faith should be. This is something you and your community must do together. So, let's break into groups and spend some time brainstorming and discussing what these artforms might look like when we take hold of them in our hometowns.

### **Group Work (Slide #12)**

Ask the participants to move to the station of the artform that interests them the most. Try to get at least 2 people at every artform if possible. Give them 20 minutes to brainstorm ways they might enjoy practicing this artform in their community with youth and adults. They can spend their time brainstorming as many ideas as possible or they can spend the time thoroughly fleshing out one idea. They can use the practices shared in the descriptions of the artforms or they can generate their own.

### **Process and Close (Slides #13 and #14)**

1. Call all the groups back together when there is 10 minutes left or when they seem to be done with their group work. Ask each group to report back to the large group. What did they discuss? What ideas did they come up with? What problems did they run into?
2. Remind them that these artforms are meant to be practiced together in order to create a process that is intended to move your congregation more deeply into the community in which it is located. We practice these artforms for the sake of the common good, for those beyond our four walls.
3. Ask each person to briefly share 1 way they help to help their congregation “go public” this year.

# Going Public

## Handout

### Three key areas of weakness in the church's approach to discipleship

*You Lost Me*, by David Kinnaman (Baker Books, 2011)

1. Relationships - Our young people are not connected relationally to enough people in the church to stay engaged in the church.
2. Vocation - Our congregations do not help young people understand or practice living out God's call in their daily lives.
3. Wisdom - Our congregations are spend more time passing on "information" rather than wisdom, which is the ability to use information wisely. A public approach to discipleship addresses all three of these problems.

### Six reasons why Millennials "drop out" of church and how the church might respond

*You Lost Me*, by David Kinnaman (Baker Books, 2011)

Reasons for "dropping out"	Appropriate Response
<b>overprotective:</b> the church is too overprotective	<b>Discernment:</b> the church must help young people discern the movement of God's spirit in risky ways
<b>shallow:</b> the church's approach to discipleship is too shallow	<b>Apprenticeship:</b> churches must apprentice young people in discipleship
<b>anti-science:</b> the church is sometimes anti-science	<b>Stewardship:</b> the church must openly discuss and live out its call to steward creation
<b>repressive:</b> the church is naïve in its teaching about sex	<b>Relational:</b> the church must discuss sex within a larger conversation of purity lived out in relationships
<b>exclusive:</b> the church excludes many who are different	<b>Embrace:</b> the church must find ways to embrace difference
<b>doubtless:</b> the church appears to not appreciate or acknowledge doubt	<b>Doing:</b> the church must model how one lives out her faith in the midst of doubt

## The Artforms

#1 - Accompaniment	
Definition:	Purpose:
In Practice:	

## #2 - Biblical Imagination

Definition:

Purpose:

In Practice:

## #3 - Discernment

Definition:

Purpose:

In Practice:

## #4 - Reflective Practice

Definition:

Purpose:

In Practice:

## #5 - Ritualization

Definition:

Purpose:

In Practice: